

Black Curlew. Occasionally different kinds of Teal, Widgeons, &c., are said to nest in the rushes that bound the inner surface of the tank bund. But, although I visited this place frequently, I saw no other birds than those described here.

The Egrets, or *Herodias Garzetta*, *Bubulcus*, and *intermedia*, were congregated in very large numbers, and roosted on the trees at night; but they do not nest, which seems singular. The natives had observed this, and I found it to be the case. Yet I believe, of all the birds that assemble here, these occur in the greatest number. *Ardea alba*, or *Herodias alba*, and *H. intermedia* are also found here; and the natives say that they breed, but I did not find any of their nests in the place during my visits to Vaden Thaugul.

A brief Account of the *Myrmica Kirbii* as found in Southern India. By JOHN SHORTT, M.D., F.L.S.

[Read Nov. 3, 1864.]

SOME years ago, when in medical charge of the Ganjam trigonometrical survey, in the jungles of Orissa, my attention was drawn to nests of this species of Ant, which, I believe, has been described by Colonel Sykes. A trip last year to the Shervaroys gave me further opportunities of examining these nests more carefully, and also afforded me the opportunity of watching the habits of the ants, as they are very plentiful on this plateau; and believing that any information on the subject may prove interesting, I beg to submit a short account of the same to the Society.

The nests of these ants are built on different kinds of trees and shrubs. I have found them on the *Syzygium Jambolana*, *Coffea Arabica*, *Psidium pomiferum*, *Citrus Aurantium*, &c. The largest nest I ever saw was taken from a *Syzygium Jambolana* at Nagalore, Shervaroy Hills, and is now in my possession; it weighs 3lbs. 8oz., is irregularly oval in form, its extreme length is 19½ inches, its girth or circumference in the centre 32½ inches, and it is sufficiently solid to withstand moderate force. I had some difficulty in securing the nest, in consequence of the ferocity of its inmates; and the tree was of some height. The nest was situated about 30 feet from the ground, on a fork of the tree, and was built round some of the branches, which protruded through it in various directions; the girth of the thickest or lowermost

branch of the fork measured $1\frac{3}{4}$ inch; all the other branches that protruded through the nest were much smaller.

The structure was made up of a fine mixture of cowdung and leaves of various kinds; but the outside was well smeared with cowdung, and honeycombed with tile-like appendages, which, whilst they permitted the free ventilation of the interior, at the same time, by a slight projection of the scale-like eaves, rendered the nest impervious to rain.

The interior was composed of irregularly tunnelled cells, comprising nurseries, stores, &c.

At Yercand, on the Shervaroys, I on one occasion procured two nests of small size (about that of a medium-sized cocoa-nut with the husk on) from two different coffee shrubs, and placed them one on either side of a window-sill in a bath-room, in the hope of watching their habits.

It was amusing to witness the threatening attitudes these diminutive creatures put on, with their abdomens flexed over their back or thorax, and their mandibles extended. They ran to and fro in a state of excitement in search of the enemy, on whom, when found, they at once advanced, and used their expanded jaws to such purpose as to cause extreme pain to the individual attacked. Considering their small size, the ferocity and undaunted courage they exhibited, and their readiness to attack man or beast who approached them were very remarkable. It was late one evening when I placed the nests in the window; early next morning I returned to see how they were, and, to my great astonishment, the window-sill was completely covered with dead and dying ants. On further examination I found that a battle had taken place between the inhabitants of the two nests; and so ferocious were the little creatures, that I found numbers even in death clinging to each other; and the battle had been so vigorously contested that the survivors were but few in number. The victors were already busily engaged in plundering the nest of the vanquished of its cocoons, and carrying them off to their own. I regretted extremely that I had lost the opportunity of witnessing so interesting a sight as this battle must have been; and as I had to leave the place a few days after, I had no opportunity of procuring another nest. I examined numerous deserted and broken-down nests, and found that all of these had been taken possession of by one or more millepedes, or *Iulus*. Whether these animals had destroyed the ants and taken

possession of their nests, or whether they had merely sought shelter in their deserted habitations, I am not prepared to say. As the millepedes are considered to feed on vegetables, it is possible that they had taken possession of these abodes to feed at leisure on their structure. I am the more inclined to this opinion from the worm-eaten appearance of some of the deserted nests.

Descriptions of New Species of the Dipterous Insects of New Guinea. By FRANCIS WALKER, F.L.S.

[Read March 3, 1864.]

Fam. MYCETOPHILIDÆ, *Haliday*.

Gen. SCIARA, *Meigen*.

1. SCIARA VARIPES. *Fem.* Testacea, antennis nigricantibus basi testaceis, pedibus longiusculis, tarsis nigris, alis cinereis.

Female. Testaceous. Antennæ blackish, testaceous towards the base, not longer than the thorax. Abdomen a little longer than the thorax. Legs slender, rather long; tarsi black. Wings cinereous; veins black; radial vein extending a little beyond the fork of the subapical vein. Length of the body 2 lines; of the wings 6 lines.

2. SCIARA? FILIPES. *Mas.* Testacea, gracilis, abdomine attenuato apicem versus nigro, pedibus longissimis, tibiis apice tarsisque fusciscentibus, alis cinereis.

Male. Testaceous, slender. Abdomen attenuated, black towards the tip, more than twice as long as the thorax. Legs slender, extremely long; tarsi and tips of the tibiæ brownish. Wings cinereous; veins brownish; radial vein ending at a little before the fork of the subapical vein; cubital vein very near the costa. Length of the body 3 lines; of the wings 7 lines.

The specimen here described is mutilated, and therefore can hardly be characterized as a new genus.

Fam. CULICIDÆ, *Haliday*.

Gen. MEGARHINA, *Desv.*

3. MEGARHINA INORNATA. *Mas.* Fusca, palpis purpureis argenteo bifasciatis, antennis nigris, pectore femoribusque argenteis, abdomine lurido apicem versus nigro, pedibus non fasciatis, alis fusciscenti-cinereis.